

CONTACT:

RID YOUR HOME OF E-WASTE EASILY

E-Waste stands for electronic waste, and it's the unwanted, obsolete, or unusable electronic products such as televisions, computers (including monitors and accessories), audio/stereo equipment, VCR and DVD players, video cameras, telephones, cell phones and other wireless devices as well as fax and copy machines and video game consoles.

While various reports estimate that electronic waste comprises less than 4 percent of the total solid waste stream in the United States, the volume of electronic waste is burgeoning. Each year, up to 50 million metric tons of e-waste are generated worldwide due to the consumer demand for the latest and fastest technology.

In New England, both Massachusetts and Maine have passed laws regulating e-waste management. In 2003, more than 330 New England municipalities had e-cycling programs - approximately 90 percent of these are located in Massachusetts.

E-waste can be managed in various ways, depending upon its continued usability, availability of reprocessing facilities, where it is generated, and other factors. Here are some options:

Reuse. Preventing waste in the first place is the preferred management option. Consider repairing or upgrading your used electronic equipment so you can continue to use it. In some cases, adding memory to a computer or upgrading software can improve the unit's performance and extend its usefulness. Instead of purchasing a new digital television, consider purchasing a converter box to receive and reformat DTV signals.

Donate. As the amount of electronic waste has increased, many charitable organizations have become overwhelmed with electronic waste and either no longer accept it or must bear the cost of disposal, further straining their limited budgets. Some charities, schools, materials exchanges, and other organizations may still be interested, however. Call first to check the organization's minimum requirements and to verify that the unit will be accepted.

Recycle. In response to consumer concerns, several electronics manufacturing companies have implemented take-back programs. Some programs allow the purchaser to pay a fee at the time of sale to

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cover shipping to a reprocessing facility when the unit becomes unwanted or obsolete. Others allow owners to ship e-waste to their facilities for a nominal fee or will provide owners with a rebate when the unit is shipped to a participating recycling center. Some waste management companies also offer similar management options to households and businesses.

Units are usually dismantled for recycling. The silver, gold, lead and other heavy metals as well as some of the plastics and glass are recycled. Leftover components are disposed as required by applicable laws and regulations.

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